

# Author inspires students' stories

By Ray Parker

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A cacophony filled the Imagine Charter School at West Gilbert auditorium Friday as about 150 excited sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders scampered for spots near the front.

They had come to hear pilot, conservationist and children's author Brooke Bessesen explain the need for passionate writing, giving as an example her own book, *Look Who Lives in the Desert*.

"I see writing as power, and you can actually change the way people see the world," she told the students. "Everyone in this room has something unique to share."

Titters of laughter followed as she showed an illustration in her book of a bat and explained how the animal eats the cactus fruit that ends up as seeds spread all over the desert.

"They (the seeds) land with their very own pot of fertilizer," said Bessesen, who has written and produced for cable networks, including the National Geographic Channel and Discovery. "See, you're learning all kinds of interesting facts."

Her first book came about after



Brooke Bessesen

friends encouraged her to do something with her long poems about her favorite subject, animals. Bessesen has been involved with animals throughout her career, spending five years with the Phoenix Zoo medical team as a certified veterinary technician and then teaching a college course on how to write children's books.

*Arizona Highways* published her book about desert animals in 2004.

In the book, Bessesen includes a short poem, interesting facts and illustrates each animal.

Language arts teacher Christine Brackman said her middle school students have used the book as an example for them to emulate. As part of a writing project, students wrote a story using techniques such as drafting, revision and publication.

"They each did a story map, came up with characters, a conflict and resolution," the teacher said. "It's great that they can see a real person who has been through what they're doing now."

The students had to find a subject

they liked when writing their own story.

Eighth-grader Michael Coleman's passion is muffins, and in his story *Lemon Twist, Mocha Starbuck and Purple Muffin* search for a safer world to live.

"They're muffins that can talk," Michael, 14, said. "I wanted to do it about cars, but we couldn't do any movies, so I picked muffins."

After the revision stage in the next few weeks, the students will illustrate their stories, which will be bound into a book.

"We'll give it to the earlier grades," Brackman said. "The older students can then read it to the younger ones. It's all about getting them excited about the written word."

## Children's author

**Name:** Brooke Bessesen.

**Age:** 41.

**Book:** *Look Who Lives in the Desert*

**Background:** Bessesen writes and produces for cable networks, including the National Geographic Channel and Discovery. She spent several years with the Phoenix Zoo medical team as a certified veterinary technician and its on-camera naturalist. Her first children's television show was *Cool Critters*.